

## KILLING AT BRANCHVILLE.

ABE PEARLSTINE IS SHOT BY J. J. JONES.

Difficulty Grew Out of Business Matter—Killing Occurred in the Post Office.

Branchville was terribly shocked Thursday morning when it became known that Mr. Abe Pearlstine, one of the town's most prominent merchants, had been shot and killed by J. J. Jones, Esq., a lawyer residing in the town, in a personal difficulty in the postoffice. The particulars of the unfortunate affair, as brought out before the coroner's jury, shows that it was one of those deplorable tragedies that is liable to happen when men resort to force to settle personal matters.

Thursday morning at about a quarter to ten o'clock, Mr. Pearlstine went to the postoffice to get his mail, and while he was in the lobby of the office Mr. Jones came in to get his mail. As Mr. Jones was about to pass him, Mr. Pearlstine accosted Jones, and handed him a paper said to have been a request to Pearlstine for the settlement of a mercantile debt of \$37.89 which he owed some house from which he had bought goods. It is said Pearlstine had paid this account to Jones some time before and held his receipt in full for the same.

Jones made some reply, which seems to have aggravated Pearlstine, who then struck Jones in the face with his fist, bruising him up pretty badly and bringing the blood. The two men then passed several blows, Jones being badly used up in the encounter. Hearing the noise outside in the lobby, Postmaster Byrd rushed out and separated the two men, requesting them not to renew the difficulty, as his wife was in the postoffice. Pearlstine, who had precipitated the row by first striking Jones, apologized to Postmaster Byrd, and assured him that he was sorry for what had happened.

Jones, who seemed to be very much excited, passed by Pearlstine and Byrd while they were talking with the intention apparently of leaving the office, but he stopped just inside the door, faced about, drew a pistol, and after slipping it out of a case, opened fire on Pearlstine, who was only a few feet away. Jones fired only once, the ball striking Pearlstine in the abdomen. When he was shot the unfortunate man exclaimed: "I am shot." Postmaster Byrd said: "Let's go to the doctor." Pearlstine replied: "I am dying." He then tried to support himself by leaning up against the door leading into the postmaster's private office; a moment later he fell backward on the floor, where he breathed his last in less than five minutes after the fatal shot.

Drs. Wimberly and Parker were hastily summoned, but were unable to render any assistance to the dying man. Immediately after he fired the fatal shot, Jones left the postoffice building and went to his law office, where he remained until he was taken in custody by Alderman S. S. Byrd. He went to Orangeburg, accompanied by the officers, and surrendered to Sheriff Salley, and was locked in jail.

Magistrate A. S. Dukes presided over the inquest which was held at 3 o'clock Thursday afternoon. There were but four witnesses examined, Postmaster Byrd, C. A. Dukes and Earl Smoak, all of whom saw the killing, and Dr. J. S. Wimberly. Postmaster Byrd testified that Pearlstine was walking away with him, when Jones came back from the front of the building and shot him. Earl Smoak was standing partly between Jones and Pearlstine when the shot was fired. The verdict of the jury was that the deceased came to his death by a gunshot wound in the hands of John J. Jones.

## Another Account.

Dr. B. A. Minus and Mr. L. H. Fairley, of Branchville, were in Charleston Thursday night. Mr. Fairley was a member of the coroner's jury which sat at the inquest over the dead body of Mr. Pearlstine. When seen by a News and Courier reporter Dr. Minus told the story of the tragedy as he had gathered it, Mr. Fairley concurring in all that he said. Dr. Minus, in speaking of the killing said:

"Pearlstine met Jones in the postoffice this morning about 9:45 o'clock and handed him a paper, supposed to be a letter from the law firm of Bowman & Bowman, of Orangeburg, relative to an account said to be due by Pearlstine. He offered the paper to Jones three times, and each time Jones refused to accept it. It seems that Jones had some time before presented Mr. Pearlstine with a bill for \$37.50 and had collected the amount. It is said that Pearlstine held the receipt for the payment of the account. The letter from a law firm requesting him to make prompt payment nettled him somewhat, and it is believed he went to Jones to get an explanation of the case.

"When Jones refused the paper for the third time Pearlstine struck him and brought blood from his face. Postmaster J. Marion Byrd, fearing a fight in the postoffice, walked out in the lobby and asked the two men not to fight, as Mrs. Byrd was in the building and she was very nervous.

"Pearlstine started to walk off with Postmaster Byrd. He begged the postmaster's pardon and asked him to excuse him for raising a disturbance in the building. Jones started out of the front door. Just as Pearlstine and Postmaster Byrd were about to enter Postmaster Byrd's office Jones came back, and stepping in front of Pearlstine, drew his pistol and fired, the ball taking effect in the right side. The wound was fatal. Pearlstine reeled and fell in half a minute. Jones ran out of the postoffice and across the street to his place of business. He stood in the door aiming his pistol toward the postoffice as if he were uncertain of having killed Pearlstine and expected him to follow him.

"Dr. J. S. Wimberly, who was on the street, near the postoffice, heard the pistol shot and ran immediately in the postoffice to the wounded man. Postmaster Byrd had called the assistant postmaster and told him to go for a doctor, but before he could start out of the building Dr. Wimberly appeared on the scene. Pearlstine called out to the doctor before he reached him that he had been shot and was dying. In a few minutes he had breathed his last.

"Mr. Pearlstine was a very popular man in Branchville, and when it was known that he had been shot by Jones many of the citizens were so aroused that they began to talk of taking violent measures with the slayer. In a few moments a big crowd had gathered around the postoffice. Alderman S. S. Byrd went to Jones' place of business and took charge of him. He turned him over to Chief of Police M. O. Browning, who disarmed him. As it was about train time Officer Browning decided it would be best to get Jones to Orangeburg and place him in the county jail without delay. Accordingly he and Mr. Howell Black boarded the train with Jones and took him to Orangeburg."

## Jones Badly Bruised.

In less than three hours after the unfortunate encounter Jones was in the sheriff's office at the court house in Orangeburg. He gave evidence of having been pretty roughly handled by Pearlstine. He had several bruises on his face which were still bloody from the blows he had received in the fight. After arriving there he went to a photographer and had himself photographed. The picture shows the scars and bruises he received in the encounter. Jones refused to be interviewed by the press, saying that he would rather not make any statement about the unfortunate affair for publication. Jones was advised by his friends to leave Branchville at once.

W. C. Martin, Esq., of Branchville, represented the dead man's family at the inquest, and W. C. Wolfe, Esq., represented Jones. It was brought out at the inquest that while Pearlstine was the aggressor, he was not armed, not having even a pen knife on his person at the time the fatal encounter took place. It is claimed by Jones' friends that immediately before the shooting, Jones was set upon by Pearlstine, who began beating him very violently, knocking him against the wall of the building, which prevented Jones from being knocked completely down; that during this onslaught Jones repeatedly asked Pearlstine to desist, but without avail.

Mr. Jones, who did the killing, is a young lawyer who has been living in Branchville some two years or more. He came there from Colleton county, where he was born and raised. He is about 35 years of age and has a wife and several children. He is a young man of good address and deportment. Mr. Jones has not the appearance of an aggressive or quarrelsome man.

Mr. Pearlstine, the victim of the unfortunate tragedy, was 34 years old. He was born and raised in Branchville, and had lived there nearly all his life. He was prominent in the business affairs of Branchville. Besides being the manager of a large mercantile business there, he was a director of the Branchville Hardware company and was a member of the board of directors of the Bank of Branchville.

## Conductor's Foot Cut Off.

Florence, December 18.—A. N. Hicks of this city, who has charge of a freight train between here and Augusta on the Coast Line, had his foot cut off at Copes yesterday. He was superintending the shifting of cars, and was caught and thrown under one of the moving cars. He was taken to Augusta as soon as local medical aid could be given him where he was. Mr. Hicks is a most popular young man, raised in Florence and has many friends here. He was recently married in Augusta, and is with his wife's family there.

## SHOT BY SON-IN-LAW.

Laroche Polite Slays Adam Howard About a \$5 Calf.

Beaufort, Dec. 26.—Laroche Polite shot and killed his father-in-law, Adam Howard, last night about 12 o'clock, on Ladies' Island as a result of Polite's taking a calf his mother is said to have purchased a few weeks ago from Polite's wife, a daughter of Howard.

Sheriff McTeer was notified early this morning that a homicide had occurred on the island, and that the slayer was at the home of his mother, and had threatened to kill anyone who approached the house. The sheriff immediately went to the scene of the killing, accompanied by a newspaper representative. Arriving at the Polite house, the sheriff found the place closed and apparently deserted. He kicked the door in and made a search of the house, finding that the man had left.

## Polite Arrested.

Polite was tracked for some miles across fields, bogs and creeks, and finally lost in a woods. Later, leaving the woods, the man was again pressed by the officer, and finally pushed toward the store conducted by Magistrate E. M. Dale, where he gave himself up without any resistance, and was conducted to jail by the sheriff.

The story of the killing, as nearly as could be learned from those in the vicinity and at the inquest, which was conducted by Magistrate Dale, the victim of last night's shooting a few weeks ago persuaded Polite's wife to leave him and go to Georgia, after spending what money Polite had given her. It is said that a few weeks ago the mother of Polite bought a calf from her son's wife for \$5, and that after the woman had left the slain man had removed the calf to his home. Last night Laroche Polite went to Howard's house and got the calf from the stable, took it away and sold it.

## Story from Howard's Wife.

Just as to the way the killing occurred is told in different ways by different disinterested persons. Isabelle and Elizabeth Howard, wife and daughter of the dead man, declare that "Rochie" Polite came back to the house at about 12 o'clock and that Adam Howard went out empty handed to remonstrate with him about the taking of the calf, and that without warning Polite emptied a load of shot into his groins and thighs, causing death in about five minutes. They say that they were in a few feet of the slain at that time and the slayer was only about eight or ten feet beyond him. Isabelle Howard says that she had a small stick about 2 inches thick and 4 feet long in one hand and another stick in the other hand, and that when Howard was shot she threw the stick beside him and caught him in her arms. One witness at the inquest testified that Howard was lying on a hickory stick about the size of the one described by the wife and identified by her during the inquest. Another witness, the first on the scene after the shooting, says she saw the stick by his side.

## Polite's Story of the Killing.

Polite says that after he took the calf he went off and sold it and was returning home by the road and was singing, when in front of the Howard home, when Howard's wife, a daughter and a son came out of the house, reviling him and advancing on him with sticks, and that he fired at Howard with the intention of hitting him in the legs and stopping him.

## Declared Howard Made Threats.

Both Polite and his mother declare that Howard had made threats to Polite a few weeks ago, at the time of the parting of Polite and his wife. The coroner's jury returned a verdict to the effect that Adam Howard came to his death as the result of a gunshot wound at the hands of Laroche Polite.

Polite was arrested a short time ago, charged with stealing a hat from the store of Wallace & Danner, but was not prosecuted by them on account of the good reputation borne by his father and mother.

## Posse Prevents Lyching.

Luverne, Ala., Dec. 18.—After scouring the surrounding country for Tweed Salter, the negro who last night killed Jack Shirley, a well known farmer, and wounded four others, including Shirley's father, a sheriff's posse to-day arrived at the Salter home just in time to prevent the lynching of Ben Salter, father of the negro wanted for the killing. The negro's sons have not been captured.

After the posse brought Salter to the Luverne jail, the mob set fire to the Salter home. Excitement is running high throughout the county and a lynching is certain if any one of the Salter boys is captured.

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